

An Litir Bheag le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 419 (which corresponds to Litir 723). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

How many Gaelic words do we have for 'snow'? They're not at all as plentiful as the words for high ground or boggy ground. But there's a few.

To begin with, there is sneachd 'snow'. We have fliuch-shneachd 'sleet', clach-shneachd 'hail' agus crann-shneachd 'dry snow'. We have ball-sneachda for 'snowball' and muc-shneachda 'snow pig' when it's extremely large. People make a muc-aitidh 'thaw pig' by rolling soft snow into a big ball when there's a thaw on.

What about 'snowflake'? There is bleideag. But also – clòimhneag, lòine, clàdan, cleit and cleiteag. A spìontag is 'a small drop of rain or flake of snow preceding a shower'. And in Arran, it's cuileaga-sneachda 'snow flies' that they said for 'snowflakes'. That's nice, isn't it?

And 'a snow shower'? Frasn-sneachda. Also we say there is an cur 'the putting' or tha i a' cur an t-sneachda 'it's putting snow'.

If it's soft, like 'sleet' in English, that is flin or flinne, fliug, gliobas, stiug, clàmhainn, flichneachd or flichneadh.

If snow is melting when the flakes hit the ground, we call that

Cia mheud facal Gàidhlig a tha againn airson 'sneachd'? Chan eil iad idir cho pailt ris na faclan airson talamh àrd no talamh bog. Ach, tha feadhainn ann.

An toiseach, tha sneachd ann. Tha fliuch-shneachd 'sleet', clach-shneachd 'hail' agus crann-shneachd 'dry snow' againn. Tha ball-sneachda againn airson 'snowball' agus muc-shneachda nuair a tha e uabhasach mòr. Bidh daoine a' dèanamh muc-aitidh le bhith a' roiligeadh sneachd bog ann am ball mòr aig àm an àiteimh.

Dè mu dheidhinn 'snowflake'? Tha bleideag ann. Ach cuideachd – clòimhneag, lòine, clàdan, cleit is cleiteag. 'S e spìontag 'a small drop of rain or flake of snow preceding a shower'. Agus, ann an Arrainn, 's e cuileaga-sneachda a bha aca airson 'snowflakes'. Tha sin snog, nach eil?

Agus 'a snow shower'? Frasn-sneachda. Cuideachd, canaidh sinn gu bheil an cur ann, no gu bheil i a' cur an t-sneachda.

Ma tha e bog, coltach ri 'sleet' ann am Beurla, 's e sin flin no flinne, fliug, gliobas, stiug, clàmhainn, flichneachd no flichneadh.

Ma tha sneachd a' leaghadh nuair a bhuaileas na bleideagan an talamh,

clifeid or glìbheid. *If it lies, it's called ùr-sneachd 'new snow'.*

If there is just enough to make the ground grey, we call it liathtas-sneachda 'greying of snow'.

It's cathadh or cabhadh we say for 'snowdrift'. We say cur is cathadh 'snowing and drifting' for heavy snow accompanied with a wind. And gnudhadh is a word for [partially] melted snow or 'slush'.

When there is a patch of snow left on a mountainside in Spring, that's a cuithe 'snow wreath'. There is a famous one in Strathspey – A' Chuithe Chrom on Cairn Gorm. In winter, skiers who are not on the piste must beware of maoimean-sneachda. Maoim-sneachda is the Gaelic for 'avalanche'.

We say cho geal ris an t-sneachd 'as white as the snow' and cho geal ri sneachd na h-aon oidhche 'as white as the one-night snow' – that's snow that wasn't lying long enough to get dirty.

canaidh sinn gur e *clifeid* no *glìbheid* a tha ann. Ma laigheas e, 's e *ùr-sneachd* a tha ann.

Ma tha dìreach gu leòr ann airson an talamh a dhèanamh liath, canaidh sinn *liathtas-sneachda* ris.

'S e *cathadh* no *cabhadh* a chanas sinn ri *snowdrift*. 'S e *cur* is *cathadh* a chanas sinn ri sneachd trom a thig le gailleann. Agus 's e *gnudhadh* facal airson *sneachd leaghte* no 'slush'.

Nuair a tha pìos de shneachd air fhàgail air cliathaich beinne as t-Earrach, 's e sin *cuithe*. Tha tè ainmeil ann an Srath Spè – *A' Chuithe Chrom* air a' Chàrn Ghorm. Anns a' gheamhradh, feumaidh sgithearan nach eil air a' phiste a bhith faiceallach mu mhaoimean-sneachda. 'S e *maoim-sneachda* a' Ghàidhlig air 'avalanche'.

Canaidh sinn *cho geal ris an t-sneachd* 'as white as the snow' agus *cho geal ri sneachd na h-aon oidhche* 'as white as the one-night snow' – 's e sin sneachd nach robh a' laighe fada gu leòr airson a bhith a' fàs salach.